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Cover photo by **Ann Summa**: for equipment identification, see page 91.

SYNTHESIZER UPSTARTS
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BANKS
&
ANTHONY
MARINELLI

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BY JEFF BURGER

MAKING FILM MUSIC IS A CRAZY way to earn a living, but some people have it crazier than others. How many film composers are asked to produce techno-pop for Giorgio Moroder one day, create an ersatz orchestra for Steven Spielberg the next, and then mix the sound of mosquitos into Buffy Sainte-Marie's voice to make a string sound? Meet Brian Banks and Anthony Marinelli, a.k.a. Sonar Productions. In their 10 years as partners, Banks and Marinelli have gone from being school pals to film industry staples. Lately, working on such big-budget extravaganzas as Cat People,

Clan Of The Cave Bear, and The Color Purple is all in a day's work at Sonar's Hollywood studio.

The two synthesist/composers met nearly 20 years ago as piano students under the same teacher. Independently, both graduated to ARP 2600 synthesizers in the mid-'70s, and eventually found themselves once again studying under the same teacher, studio synthesist Clark Spangler. In 1977, they joined forces to perform synthesized arrangements of classical music for live radio broadcasts from the Museum of Natural History in Los Angeles. During that period, the duo led

six Yamaha CS-80s through such masterpieces as Beethoven's *Eighth Symphony*, Bach organ works, and Scott Joplin rags. After pooling their resources to buy an eight-track tape recorder and setting it up in Marinelli's parents' garage, the team started getting calls for commercial work. This led to their exposure to, and acquisition of, a New England Digital Synclavier—and things just haven't been the same since.

The Synclavier proved to be the calling card they needed to kick their careers into high gear. "FM was a major thing," Marinelli recalls. "That's what the system had to offer, and that's why we got into it. There was no terminal and no sampling, and the DX7 was still a good two years in the future. The Synclavier, coupled with our demo tape, which consisted of classical pieces, got us *Blue Thunder* over the name synthesists of the time. We could combine scoring, arranging, and making a big sound using FM to get new sounds. When we got *Blue Thunder*, everything took off."

After three months of work, they had transformed Arthur B. Rubinstein's musical sketch into one of the first scores realized on a digital synthesizer—and this time the orchestra was used to sweeten the synthesizers, rather than the other way around. The word spread quickly, and composers began turning to Banks and Marinelli as arrangers, orchestrators, and synthesists all rolled into one. Rubinstein called them back for *War Games* and *The Best Of Times*, Larry Rosenthal hired them for *Heart Like A Wheel*, and Jack Nitzsche used the duo for *Starman*, *Stripper*, and *Stand By Me*. Then came Quincy Jones' score for *The Color Purple* and—well, their film bio alone is four pages long! And then there are the record credits, which include an obscure album called *Thriller* by a guy named Michael Jackson.

Through it all, the two synthesists worked out of a garage. Two years ago, however, Sonar moved to a custom-designed studio in the heart of Hollywood. Banks says, "People would come to the garage and say, 'Gee, those kids are great.' Now they call us 'guys'!" The 'guys' have a 24-track room decked out with a video system and every imaginable piece of audio equipment, including two Synclavier systems. The off-line system has 32 FM voices, SMPTE, a touch-sensitive keyboard, a 20-Meg Winchester hard disk, and a Kennedy tape drive. Along with 32 FM voices, the on-line unit sports 16 voices of sampling, eight megabytes of sampling memory, and eight individual outputs. Sonar's battery of support synths includes a Roland Super Jupiter, an Oberheim Xpander, a Prophet-5 with MIDI, a DX7, four ARP 2600s driven by MIDI-to-control-voltage converters, and more. Of course, there's also a Yamaha C7B grand, for those times when a sampled piano just won't do.

One of Sonar's most recent projects is Sylvester Stallone's *Over The Top*, with music by Giorgio Moroder, who originally called Banks and Marinelli for *Cat People*. "He had just bought a Synclavier," Banks remembers, "and, like many Synclavier owners, he thought it was great, but didn't have any way of getting into it. So we programmed it." *Keyboard* caught up with Banks and Marinelli at their studio, where they were taking a breather between sessions for the Stallone film and two new projects, *Nice Girls Don't Explode* and *Pinocchio And The Emperor Of The Night*.

* * * *

D*O YOU RELY ON THE SYNCLAVIER for most of your work?*

Banks: As much as we may not like to tie our success to a hunk of hardware, having a Synclavier early on was really our calling card. There wasn't any competition. DX7s were still a long way off, and even with 32 DX7 algorithms, there isn't one that sounds like a couple of the setups that are on the Synclavier. We have a DX7 here, and it does some FM synthesis that the Synclavier doesn't, but they're different. Also, Anthony got very involved with consulting for the development of the Synclavier. A lot of things that are on the instrument are our fault! It's a nice feeling to be involved in the development of a musical instrument.

Why do you need two Synclaviers?

Marinelli: There are two of us! Actually, one Synclavier lives in the recording studio and is used almost exclusively for performance, and the other is in the B room. We use that one for composing and making our own sounds. We're trying to write music that's both idiomatic to the instrument and married to video. Staying locked to picture all the time is really exciting. You can get such continuity. You can keep seeing the picture and reworking something, kind of like getting an orchestral performance the way Ravel might have.

You have floppy disk drives, Winchester hard disks, and Kennedy tape drives. Why so many different storage media?

Banks: Cost and convenience. Floppy disks are convenient, but they're more expensive per megabyte than Kennedy tapes, and the Kennedy is faster to retrieve from. We have a couple of hundred 15-Meg tape cartridges filled up. To keep that many floppy disks around is very time-consuming. Also, somebody has to sit there and feed them to the Synclavier. Just for a violin sound, we're into over 30 floppy disks. You're talking about a sample 50K long at 16-bit for every minor third across the range [of the keyboard]. We've got 13 or 14 [samples laid out] horizontally and up to three [layered] vertically. So you can have up to 45 16-bit 50K samples, and call that a violin.

Banks (L) and Marinelli with New England Digital Synclavier; original Garfield Dr. Click rests below Synclavier terminal.

Marinelli: Each sample, except for the hard down-bows, is between two and six seconds long. Manufacturers brag about 17 seconds worth of sampling—we fill eight Meg of RAM with one instrument. At 50K, sampling with 16-bit words, you get roughly 10 seconds per megabyte, so eight Meg is 80 seconds. That's how much we're using for one instrument. That's how you get great sounds.

Banks: Because of our training and background, we spend a lot of time trying to make a great-sounding orchestra. We've made it our business to get a lot of great orchestral samples. It's getting harder and harder as the players get hip to the fact that we can do a good job of imitating them.

Marinelli: Four years ago, they wanted to look at the [sampled] waveform [on the Synclavier screen]—they loved it. Now you can't get the good players. We were always straight about it. We told them what

we were doing, and what it was going to be used for, and we tried to get people who were into it. If the players aren't into it, you're going to get rotten samples anyway. Part of our philosophy is to limit what we want to get in a night, because they'll blow themselves out and they won't get good tone on that many articulations in a night. We try to get three dynamic levels on everything. We go up in minor thirds, and then we try to get some articulations that we can stack vertically and bring in using velocity, pressure, pedals, breath control, and the control knob.

Banks: The sampling process is very laborious. You can assume that there are going to be takes that sound bad to your ear. Well, in order to guarantee that you've got one good take when you go to edit the

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samples, you'd better have two takes that you thought were good when they went down. There's no time, while a musician is sitting there, to listen to them all. You just keep rolling, and make sure that you have two that you think are good. One of them is bound to be good, and if we're lucky enough to get two that are good, that's great, because now we have a double.

What do you use the double for?

Banks: For an a *due* part [a unison part played by two of the same instrument]. Doubling the same sample doesn't work. If you double samples, you get awful, ugly, terrible phasing. And if you delay the waveform or pitch-change it, all you do is make an ugly phase-shifter out of it. You don't get the sound of two instruments. You need two whole different samples. Psychologically and, sometimes, musically, it's nice if they're from different players, but at least they must be different samples.

Marinelli: We hand-play all the parts, because if you're playing the bottom guy and the top guy has the melody, you would do different things with vibrato and dynamics. We put in pedal information and all kinds of stuff to give us separate control.

Banks: Often, we'll play a whole bunch of lines into the Synclavier—we have a 200-track recorder here. Then I can roll all these takes in nonjustified time or in justified time. I'll play both flute parts, or the

first and second violins, into the sequencer, but with three passes of each. Then I'll spread them out in stereo to put them on the multi-track.

Marinelli: A lot of times the performances are done in the composing room, because, as you're composing, if you learn to think clearly and take a little extra time, you can get your performances done.

Do you find yourselves creating non-acoustic sounds on the Synclavier?

Banks: One of the more interesting things we did was for *The Color Purple.* There's a scene where Celie, the main female character, is in her house, which is a dilapidated place with a leaky roof. It's pouring rain, and she's got little tin cans and pails all over the living room. Her sister has been in Africa and sends her letters. Hearing the plink-plink-plink of the rain in the tin cans reminds Celie of the kalimba [African thumb-piano] music her sister has been telling her about. So we were asked to come up with a sequence that would go from raindrops to kalimba. They gave us a piece of kalimba music to segue into.

Marinelli: We also did some of the voices in *Pinocchio And The Emperor Of The Night.* We did James Earl Jones.

Banks: He's the villain, the Emperor Of The Night.

What did you do to him?

Banks: Processed the hell out of him.

Marinelli: The amplitude of his voice gates a sound that's constantly changing, a whole 24 tracks' worth of sounds. The

24-track just runs, ticking off these sounds. Each track has up to 10 different sounds laid on it—espresso machines blasting air into Sparklets bottles, mosquitos multi-tracked and taken down five octaves, low voices moaning, all kinds of windy, low rumblings. They all gate in along with backwards reverb when he talks. It's a great sound.

Banks: And all starting with his voice, which is one of the greatest instruments around.

Marinelli: For *Starman,* the string sounds came from one mosquito in a jar. We multi-tracked it loads of times, all out of phase—it was just five minutes of mosquito, so we'd record a bit of it, pick up at another point later on and dub it over the front part, and so on until there were 36 tracks of it. It was like 36 string players. A lot of the string sounds were mosquito mixed with Buffy Sainte-Marie's voice.

Banks: We wanted some good drum sounds for *Fast Forward,* so we went to a high school gymnasium, with all the horrible echo, and bounced balls on the floor. They made great kick drums. Unfortunately, there was an air conditioner going. So I looked at the recording on the Synclavier's SFM screen [Signal File Manager, one of the Synclavier's sampling software packages] and saw that there was a spike around 18K. Nobody would have heard that in the gymnasium, but when you isolate a sound and then play it in a lower range, even a perfect fifth lower, it's right

there in your ear. So [using the software] I built a digital filter that removed a band between 17,950Hz to 18,050Hz. It worked just like a razor blade, removing just that frequency and leaving the rest of the sample untouched.

How much do you use the sequencing aspect of the Synclavier?

Banks: Extensively. We live and die inside of that sequencer. When we're doing an orchestral simulation, we play everything by hand into the sequencer. We use the sequencer because we can do editing in there that we could never do on tape.

Marinelli: Directors are always making changes at the last minute. We can just stick the floppy in, move some stuff around, and be done with it.

You compose while you watch the picture, with the Synclavier locked to SMPTE?

Banks: The Synclavier locks to picture with its own SMPTE interface. It'll track as slowly as one frame per second—you won't get any of those joyboxes to do that.

Marinelli: You hear your music at pitch, but it's slow.

Banks: You can tap a click track into the Synclavier. It's not just a sound reference for you to play against, but the justifying click track, so that if you want to do a justified [quantized] sequencer line against it, or if you're looking at it for beat reference on the screen, it's your actual click track.

Or you can type in the click: I want 87 clicks at this tempo, and then *accelerando* in the next 12 beats logarithmically to this new tempo, hang there for 12 beats, and then *ritard* down linearly in three beats to a new tempo.

Marinelli: The only movie we didn't use the sequencer for was *The Color Purple*, because we weren't doing the final score, except for that one cue with the raindrops. We did what we call Polaroids—we did the whole score, before it was recorded by orchestra. There were 18 composers, each with one or two or three cues. Quincy [Jones] had the themes on lead sheets which would go to the composer who was to work on a particular cue. The composer would write a six-line sketch, the sketch would come to us, and we'd fill it out for orchestra. We were just ripping through those cues. It was all hand-played directly to tape, with just two guys—one of us and our engineer, Mark Curry—recording up to six minutes of finished music a day. We did over 100 minutes of score like that. Those recordings went to Spielberg. he would look at them against picture, make changes, and send them back to the composer, who would send them back to us for a final version. Then we'd send them back to Spielberg. he was dealing with the real score as a temp score [temporary score, an already-recorded, often well-known, piece of music used until the actual score is ready]. We had to work fast, so it wasn't

our best orchestra. Six minutes a day was hell.

Banks: Making orchestral Polaroids is a side business of ours. It's music insurance for directors and producers. A union orchestra is going to cost between $12,000 and $19,000 for a three-hour session. If there are mistakes or changes to be made in the score, they have to call the orchestra back for a three-hour minimum call. They can hire us for three weeks for less money than it would cost them to hire a 90-piece orchestra for a six-hour day. Very often in an orchestral score there are two or three cues that might be questionable; the director is really worried about the big love scene or the big chase. For $2,000 to $5,000, they can have a very representative orchestral demo and know whether or not the cues are happening.

How do you work together? What roles do you each play?

Banks: All of the above. Generally, we both write, play, do business, talk on the phone. But we each have our strengths and weaknesses.

Marinelli: We started out trying to do everything together, but there was more and more demand. Dividing up the tasks enabled the quality to get exponentially better as we increased our output.

Banks: Typically, we work together most when we're developing themes for a project, much more so than in the day-to-day work once the project gets started. The major conceptual stuff we really col-

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laborate on. For instance, for *Nice Girls Don't Explode*, Anthony is doing the lion's share of the writing, while I'm doing the lion's share of production. It's faster that way because he's into the movie. He knows the characters and what's going to happen. I know what his floppy disk is going to look like when it gets to me.

Is it possible for you to collaborate that way if you're not working in your own studio?

Banks: One of the biggest reasons we put the studio together was the amount of software and hardware that had to be comfortably in place for us to be efficient. If we're going to have record producers, other composers, and advertising agents in here, we don't want them to feel like they're intruding on someone's backyard.

Marinelli: We were sidemen, too, and it was a drag to move all our stuff in and deal with a new engineer.

Banks: Giorgio Moroder has one of the finest studios in Los Angeles. When we did *Over The Top*, he gave us two days just to set up. We spent the better part of two days with [engineer] Brian Reeves setting up and getting the kinks out. The Synclavier lives in its own air-conditioned closet at our place. Giorgio didn't have that. We had to get special cables made, special MIDI cables with 50-foot runs, to put the Synclavier in its own private space.

Marinelli: We wanted to stay out of the studio business, but we ended up studio owners. We had to. We couldn't do our work running around on dates.

Banks: Doing sessions was dissatisfying for us on another level, too—the creative level. If you're in there and there are 60 other guys sitting there waiting for you to finish, you don't get to take time to get a sound the way you want it. So you call up presets. The technology allows for a lot of presets these days, but when you use them, you're not creating anything new.

Marinelli: When you're in your own room, you can do five things at once. You can load a sample in, pick up the phone, and practice the part you're going to play. It's really an efficient way to spend your day, and it's more fun. When you go on a date, it's "hurry up and wait." That's going to change, I think. Even the Record Plant [recording studio] built a synthesizer room.

How much of the work you've been doing lately involves composing original music?

Banks: Right now, all of it.

Marinelli: *Pinocchio And The Emperor Of The Night* is 85 minutes of orchestra that we're scoring now, and *Nice Girls Don't Explode* is 20 minutes, so we've got 100 minutes of orchestra to write in less than three months. Plus, we've got our clients: all the Suzuki Samurai commercials, KNBC News every week and—who

knows? We might be getting into records next month.

Could you tell us about the Pinocchio project?

Banks: It's absolutely wall-to-wall music. Occasionally, we've been allowed to take a breath, maybe for one sentence. No kidding!

Marinelli: This is our best orchestra [simulation] to date. For the strings, it has five or six articulations—tremolos, off-of-the-string bowing, arcos, pizzicato, different dynamic levels—and it's all triple-tracked. If you were to take a sampled string sound and play a fast run, the attacks would sound mechanical. The way to avoid that is to use velocity to control volume, decay time, and attack time, so that your attack times are slightly different on each note. If you play it by hand and multi-track it, overlapping different string samples, you can eliminate that problem.

Banks: You can't get legato strings with fewer than three tracks. If we had a Mitsubishi 32-track [digital tape recorder] or tons and tons of RAM [in the Synclavier], I'd probably do it five or six times. The question that always comes up is, "If you have three 16-violin samples, aren't you making the most gargantuan string sample in the world?" The answer is no, because when you play from one note to another with a 16-violin sample, you still get only one gate per note. Part of the mass that you

when a string section moves is that all notes change at different moments. t only are there 16 slightly different ches, but the start times and the dura- ns aren't all the same. In a real orchestra, u've got 16 violinists doing it, so three mpled tracks] is not a whole lot. But by time you add a little reverb and a little L [digital delay line], it seems to work lf out.

Marinelli: We also have our down- vs on velocity, so if you hit the key real d, you've got a couple of different ng sounds striking at once. We cheat t way. Also, the down-bows mixed with o give you more articulation. For every trument, you've got to have a lot of ks.

Do the various synthesizers in your up play specific musical roles?

Banks: It's all in the variety. The reason don't see a [Yamaha] TX816 here is that ould give us eight guys that sound the ne. If I want five clarinets, I don't want variations of a DX clarinet. I want a DX rinet, a Roland clarinet, an Oberheim rinet, a Synclavier clarinet, and a quential clarinet, because then I have inherently different clarinets. A lot of record stuff, quick orchestra stuff, and ck synthesizer TV stuff has a very shal- y sound because it's all one thing.

There's enough of that kind of writing around. It's fast and easy to do with syn- thesizers. There are a lot of people who are using synthesizers as a convenience. Now they can have all these sounds in their bedroom. For us, the synthesizer is our instrument. We started studying young, and we play all different kinds of music with it. I don't ever expect to be satisfied.

Marinelli: We always argue, "Who's ahead, the manufacturers or the players?" I say the manufacturers are ahead, because we still aren't writing music for the instru- ment [idiomatically,] the way Chopin wrote for piano.

Banks: But the artist is always pulling the technology. Artists aren't writing music that Anthony might call idiomatic to the instrument because the artist hears some- thing else, and often has to fight with the instrument to get it. And then he'll have to settle for something in between. Drum machines like to go in loops, so you hear a lot of music that is segmented to a fault. Synthesizers have always been considered do-everything machines, but they've never lived up to it. Even old Moog syn- thesizers were supposed to be able to create any sound, and all you have to do is sit with one for a while and you'll know that that couldn't be further from the truth. The composer says, "Okay, now do this!" The machine says, "No." So the composer says, "Well, what will you do?" And it answers, "With this software update

and that hardware, I'll do this." So the composer says, "All right, I'll write this, but I really wish I could write that."

Marinelli: What is a synthesizer for? Is it an instrument, or is it the do-everything box? New England Digital is saying the Synclavier is a recording studio in a box, but it's not really.

Banks: It's really a new kind of tape recorder, musical instrument, and signal processor all rolled into one. It's not really a recording studio in a box—yet—because it doesn't employ EQ, an array of faders for mixing, or a room to put a musician in.

Marinelli: We don't have the sample- to-disk option yet, but we will by August, and when we do, we'll use the 24-track for no more than reverb returns. We'll have as many as 12 great stereo reverb sounds, and let the Synclavier play back the whole thing, all digitally, and master to CD, number to number—if it works. If the multi-track is doing no more than playing back reverb, the noise floor will drop by a tremendous amount, because reverb doesn't have to be very loud in the mix.

Banks: We're going to be getting eight Winchester drives worth of what NED calls direct-to-disk. They'll sample at up to 100K—no other digital recorder is even in that league—and you can get up to 26 minutes per drive. They're run by the Syn- clavier sequencer. Any number of those disks can be recording at any one time. Now, if you have a number of vocal takes

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for a pop tune, you can take one phrase from take 17 and stick it on take 1, and the computer will very gently cross-fade from one to the other and back. It puts a Band-Aid over the joint between the two, but it's completely nondestructive, so if you don't like the way it sounds, you can go back.

Marinelli: The next software will be a CD algorithm that figures out the numbers so that you don't have to go back to the analog domain to make a CD. Who knows what that'll sound like?
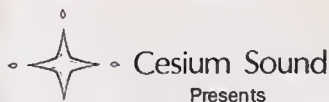
Banks: We're also getting their optical disk storage system, which records to 12-inch laser disks—two-gigabyte random-access disks. Our sample library will go on that. The cataloguing structure is so sophisticated that the catalog on your Winchester tells you, if you have more than one laser disk, which disk the sound you want is on. They're setting the whole thing up as a database management system. A laser disk will hold 10,000 entries, and there's no way you could ever flip through that many entries. So you ask it, "Tell me what I've got in terms of *pizz* violins," and it'll tell you.

Marinelli: That's the dream-come-true. For what we do, the library work is a real pain in the neck. If it's all in one spot, I'll be in heaven.

Banks: The Synclavier is an interesting instrument. The world knows it's a very expensive animal. We have always approached the Synclavier on two levels. First of all, it's the greatest musical synthesizer we've ever dealt with. But also, for that kind of money, you have to ask yourself, "Is this a good business venture?" Until now, the sample-to-disk option wasn't cost-effective, even though it's the funnest thing in the world. There is nothing more wonderful than working on a tune with 16 tracks of live stuff and 200 tracks of samples, and you say, "Okay, let's go to bar 12," and boom—you're right there! But remember, there's music, and there's the music business. You have to pay attention to the music business. Otherwise, you can't have a Synclavier.

Speaking of business, we understand that the American Federation of Musicians in Los Angeles recently accepted your proposal for a revision of the Union's wage scale for synthesists. What was your proposal, and why did you make it?

Banks: Usually, when you're doing a film score, every player is paid for a three-hour minimum, and they're also paid per overdub. The theory is that if you play one line, go back to the head of the tape, and play another line that goes over it, in the old days you'd have been two people. So ever since multi-tracking became standard, anyone doing an overdub has been paid twice, as though there were two people. Now, if you start at the beginning of a cue playing your DX7, and then at bar 17 you play your [Oberheim] Xpander, and then you play your [Sequential] Prophet-5,

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those are called doubles, rather than over-dubs. That started with the woodwind doubler, who plays a variety of instruments during a cue. Doubles are paid as additional fractions of scale. With all the new synthesizers, computers, and sequencers, the number of tracks a synthesist has recorded for a cue no longer bears any relationship to the work that is done. Also, when you're a synthesist, you play arranger, orchestrator, engineer—everything. We came up with a proposal that synthesists should be paid by the hour at an inflated rate, with an unlimited amount of overdubs, doubles or anything else they're called upon to do. We needed a more standardized way of doing things, so that we can all make money. Producers won't be afraid of us, because they'll know from the beginning how much it's going to cost. The scale that ended up being accepted was $200 an hour for one synthesist and $175 an hour for two or more synthesists. Scale for 25 or fewer orchestral players is $199.16 per player for three hours, so it's roughly triple scale.

Marinelli: We've seen the tables turn. We've been together for 10 years, and in the beginning the Union didn't want any part of us. Using a synthesizer for a bass part was unheard-of. After a few years, we began to be treated like musicians. Then it got to the point where we were considered sidemen, but after a while we were doing bigger things than that—arranging, making sure the whole score got recorded properly. Now we can package the whole thing and deliver the finished product to the movie studio, and all they have to do is dub it.

Is this going to satisfy the acoustic players who are losing work to synthesists?

Marinelli: Whenever a new technology comes along, people get burned, and I'll do anything I can to help. It's like Social Security: You help the people who set it up for you. Well, those people set it up for us, and we owe it to them not to leave them out in the cold. But the realistic end of it is that it's going to be cooler than it has been in the past. Musicians have to stick together, though. There aren't very many people who really care about musicians in the business of film and recording.

Banks: To a greater or lesser degree, this stuff is inevitable, because film is a high-tech industry. Look at what they're doing in theaters, with six-track audio, all these computerized visual effects, and everything locked to SMPTE or VITC [Vertical Interval Time Code]. To have a computer-locked music system makes sense to people who are producing films because it fits right into what they're doing. If they can find composers who can make effective music with these systems—with whatever sounds they're capable of producing—it's bound to be less expensive, because it's tied more closely into the process of making the film. On one level you can say, "Why do I need 80 people, 30 micro-

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phones, six recordists, and a big sound-stage when I can hire one or two people, and they can satisfy the picture and make great sounds?" And I'm not even talking about orchestral simulation. I'm talking about new sounds, whatever they may be.

Marinelli: But it should be the composer's decision. I don't want to see us all get squeezed out. The producer's dream is to hire a programmer and say, "Give me a score that sounds like this temp score." They want to pay you as a programmer, not as a composer. That's why we got involved with all this Union stuff in the first place. The Union hated us in the beginning, and we weren't exactly loving it. But we realized that we had to form a coalition, we had to find out who our real enemies are—not our enemies, but the people who don't care about the music, who only care about product. Now, I'm really afraid of the people who go in and say, "I'm a programmer. I'll work for a low hourly rate," $25 an hour or something, and they end up composing, and people don't care. Not everybody cares about music.

Banks: Film studios and record producers want to hire people and call them programmers. That gets them off the Musicians Union contract and gets them in real cheap, but what it does is drag down the perceived value of the job to the degree that it's just like cleaning the toilets. When the perception of the value of the job drops to that level, then the musician has no leverage. There's someone around the corner saying, "Yeah, I'll knock that out. I've got an [E-mu] Emulator," or "I've got a Synclavier." Synclavier guys tend not to be like that, because they've got so much money invested in their equipment that they have to make their money back.

Marinelli: Look at the claims made by the ads in the magazines. The producers read these things and believe them.

Banks: When we do what we do, we really have to stand firm and say, "We're doing music here. We're players if you hire us as players. We're composers if you hire us as composers. But we're never programmers. If you just want me to twist knobs, that's fine, but I'm still making musical decisions, and you're going to pay me that way. You're going to respect the fact that this is what I'm doing. That's why I've gone to the expense of getting the finest instrument that I can buy to do the art work that I do."

Marinelli: That's the only way to keep up with this. If you want to have this kind of equipment, you have to go through these politics in order to do it. If you don't, your art suffers, because it's a high-tech art. It's dependent on the instruments, and they don't get better with age. We're riding the wave. We're still on the surfboard, but it's rough water.